

REMARKS

The Office Action of July 13, 2011 has been received and carefully considered. Claims 1 and 23 have been amended. Claim 24 has been cancelled. No new matter has been added. Claims 3 and 7-18 were previously cancelled. Thus, claims 1-2, 4-6, and 19-23 are currently pending. Reconsideration of the current rejections in the present application is respectfully requested based on the following remarks.¹

I. THE ALLOWABILITY OF CLAIM 24

Applicant notes with appreciation the indication on page 6 of the Office Action that claim 24 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. In response to the Examiner's suggestions, claim 1 has been amended in this manner, and thus should now be allowable. Acknowledgment of same is respectfully requested.

¹ As Applicants' remarks with respect to the Examiner's rejections are sufficient to overcome these rejections, Applicants' silence as to assertions made by the Examiner in the Office Action or certain requirements that may be applicable to such rejections (e.g., assertions regarding dependent claims, whether a reference constitutes prior art, whether references are legally combinable for obviousness purposes) is not a concession by Applicants that such assertions are accurate or such requirements have been met, and Applicants reserve the right to analyze and dispute such in the future.

II. CLAIM OBJECTIONS

Claims 23 and 24 are currently objected to because of certain informalities. In response, claim 23 has been amended to depend on claim 2, as suggested by the Office Action, and is believed to be in compliance. Claim 24 has been cancelled.

III. THE OBVIOUSNESS REJECTION OF CLAIMS 1, 2, 4-6, 19-23

On page 3 of the Office Action, claims 1, 2, 4-6, 19-23 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,959,507 to Tanaka et al. ("Tanaka") in view of U.S. Publication No. 2002/0155021 to Nagai et al. ("Nagai") and U.S. Patent No. 5,046,238 to Daigle et al. ("Daigle"). Applicants respectfully submit that the current rejections are improper for at least the reasons set forth in the prior response. However, in an effort to expedite prosecution, Applicants have amended claim 1 to include the limitations of allowable claim 24.

In view of the current amendment, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection has been overcome and thus rendered moot. In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully requested that the aforementioned rejection of claims 1, 2, 4-6, 19-23 be withdrawn.

IV. CONCLUSION

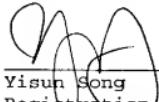
In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that the present application is in condition for allowance, and an early indication of the same is courteously solicited. The Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned by telephone at the below listed telephone number, in order to expedite resolution of any issues and to expedite passage of the present application to issue, if any comments, questions, or suggestions arise in connection with the present application.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 CFR § 1.136 is hereby made.

Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account No. 50-0206, and please credit any excess fees to the same deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: Oct. 11, 2011

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